

**FREEDOM OF CHOICE AS SEEN ON VERONICA ROTH'S NOVEL  
*DIVERGENT* (2011): AN EXISTENTIALIST PERSPECTIVE**



Submitted as a Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Getting Bachelor  
Degree of Education in English Department

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# **FREEDOM OF CHOICE AS SEEN ON VERONICA ROTH'S NOVEL *DIVERGENT* (2011): AN EXISTENTIALIST PERSPECTIVE**

## **ABSTRAK**

Penelitian kualitatif ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis adanya kebebasan memilih dalam novel *Divergent* dengan menggunakan teori eksistensialisme. Metode pengumpulan data dalam penelitian ini adalah teknik dokumentasi. Metode ini digunakan dengan cara membaca novel *Divergent* kemudian menganalisis novel untuk menemukan eksistensialisme karakter dalam novel tersebut. Kebebasan memilih adalah salah satu tema yang bisa dilihat dalam novel. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan indikator kebebasan memilih, bagaimana kebebasan memilih digambarkan dalam novel, dan alasan mengapa penulis menciptakan tema kebebasan memilih dalam novel tersebut. Peneliti juga menemukan perspektif eksistensialisme dengan menggunakan prinsip enam dasar milik Bigelow. Peneliti menemukan adanya Keberadaan Sebelum Esensi, Absurditas, Takut, dan Kebebasan memiliki peran dalam mencari kebebasan memilih.

Kata Kunci: kebebasan, kebebasan memilih, *Divergent*, Veronica Roth, eksistensialisme, teori eksistensialisme

## **ABSTRACT**

This qualitative research has purpose to analyze the existence of freedom of choices in *Divergent* novel by using existentialist theory. The method of collecting data in this research is documentation technique. The method is used by reading the *Divergent* novel and then analyzing the novel to find the existentialism of the characters in the novel. Freedom of choice is one of the themes that can be seen in the novel. The result of this research shows the indicators of freedom of choice, how freedom of choice is portrayed in the novel, and the reasons why the author addressing freedom of choice in the novel. The researcher also finds the existentialist perspective using the principles of Bigelow's six basic tenants. The researcher found that Existence Before Essence, Absurdity, Fear, and Freedom have the role in searching freedom of choice.

**Keywords:** freedom, freedom of choice, *divergent*, Veronica Roth, existentialism, existentialist theory

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

*Divergent* has been researched by seven researchers using different issues and theories. The three of them focus on the female characters by using feminist theory. The first is analyzing the beauty myth on the female

characters in the novel (Wa Ode Malinda, 2017). The second is analyzing women stereotypes presented in Tris Prior (Ken Respati Priatidita Chandra Wardhani, 2015). The third is analyzing the spirit of feminism against women negative stereotypes (Hilda Nur Ainun, 2015). Two of them focus on faction system in the novel by using Marxist theory. The first is analyzing the discrimination toward certain factions (Anam Zahrur, 2016). Second is analyzing the hegemony of every faction (Elmira Primananda, 2015). One of them focuses on analyzing the main character's personality (Wulandari & Arinda Saraswati, 2016). And the last research focus on the translation technique that is used in the novel (Auliya Rahmawati, 2016)

However, based on the previous studies, some of the researchers are just focusing on the women stereotypes and how factions work in the novel. The researcher found that the issue freedom of choice has never been researched yet. Besides, freedom of choice is one of the most important things to have in human life. Freedom is related to existentialism. Human is not only to exist but to understand his existence. It focuses on a human activity because the human's activity is human's existence (Dagun. 1990). So, existentialism affirms human's activity. It is including their action of thinking, talking, choosing, etc.

This research conducts *Divergent* novel with the issue of freedom of choice by using an existentialist perspective. It aims to describe how the issue freedom of choice can be found in the novel. In this research, the researcher also found the existentialist perspective using the principles of Bigelow's six basic tenants. The researcher found that *Existence Before Essence, Absurdity, Fear, and Freedom* have the role in searching freedom of choice.

## **2. RESEARCH METHOD**

This research is descriptive qualitative research. The researcher conducts two objects of the study as follows, formal object and material object. The formal object is discussing about the issue freedom of choice

using existentialist approach and the material object is Veronica Roth's *Divergent* novel published by HarperCollins in 2011. In the technique of collecting data, the researcher uses documentation method. The researcher interprets the document (novel) to give voice and meaning related to the issue. In the technique of analyzing data, the researcher has four steps. First, the researcher chooses the object that will be analyzed. Then, the researcher focuses on the freedom of choice that the main character has. After that the researcher identifies the relation between the main character's freedom of choice and the theory that the researcher has read existentialism. Finally, the case is analyzed through descriptive analysis technique.

### **3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

#### **3.1 Indicators of Freedom of Choice**

In this novel, the researcher found five indicators of freedom of choice depicted in the novel as follows: brave for choosing different choices from other people, consistent with the choices, increase self-esteem, protect others and keep a secret.

##### **3.1.1 Choosing Different Choices From Other People**

Choosing different choice refers to the struggle of making different choices from other people and take the sequences. Tris is a brave girl. Even though she is from Abnegation, but her braveness is showing. Maybe because she is a *Divergent* so her old faction does not affect her behavior. Moreover, her braveness is always related to the choices she chooses. It looks like she sees things differently from other people. While other people choose A, Tris chooses B just because her mind says B. Society cannot affect her choice because once she chooses a choice, she will stay with it.

##### **3.1.2 Being Consistent With The Choices**

Being consistent with the choice refers to the main character's characteristics. Once she chooses something, she will never

change nor regret it. She will never change her mind because once she focuses on one thing; she will continue to stay with it no matter what happens. Tris has to make a lot of choice in her life and she is always consistent with every choice she makes.

#### 3.1.3 Increasing Self-esteem

Increasing self-esteem refers to the efforts of the characters to fit in some places or to prove that they belong to certain places. Most of the people look at Tris as a weak girl because she is from Abnegation so she tries so hard to prove that she belongs in Dauntless and she deserves to be in Dauntless just like anyone else. She tries so many ways to fit in Dauntless, to improve her, to show people that she is no joke. She wants to increase her self-esteem

#### 3.1.4 Protecting Others

Protecting others refers to the need of protecting the one that you love from danger. Although Tris seems quiet and indifferent from outside, inside Tris cares for her friends. She does not like seeing her friends get hurt or in danger. So she tries to protect her friends multiple times. When Tris already sees you as a friend, she will do anything to protect you.

#### 3.1.5 Keeping Secret

Keeping secret refers to keeping something important to you and let nobody knows about it. Tris has a lot of secrets, the biggest secret she has is the fact that she is *Divergent*. She has to keep her secret from anyone. The reason she has to stay silent is that she has to protect herself. *Divergent* is seen as a threat in Chicago so she has to lie several times to hide her true identity.

### 3.2 How freedom of choice portrayed in the novel

Freedom of choice is depicted in the novel through characters, setting of places, events, diction and imagery & symbol.



### 3.2.1 Creating characters

Veronica creates so many types of characters in the novel. In here, the researcher divides it into three types of characters that are related to the issue. There are oppressed characters, freedom seeking characters and awareness raising characters.

#### 1) *Oppressed Characters*

There are several oppressed characters in the novel, mostly from Dauntless's new members. The Dauntless's leaders see them as scared little kids because they are from different factions. So Dauntless's leader trains them to be strong. They have to fight each other in the ring to prove who is stronger. The oppressed characters are Tris Prior and Christina.

#### 2) *Freedom Seeking Characters*

Freedom seeking characters are the characters that never feel freedom before. They cannot reach freedom because of several reasons. For example, the society would not allow them to be "free". Free for choosing, free for speaking, free for doing, etc. Everything will never change if they do not do something so they start to do something that other people don't. They start to do something different from other people, without having to be scared that the society will judge them. In this type of characters, Tris Prior and her boyfriend (Four) are included.

#### 3) *Awareness-raising Characters*

The meaning of awareness-raising characters in here is characters which raise the awareness of the freedom of choice. The characters help other characters to be aware of the existence of the freedom itself. Before the characters help other people, they already feel that they need freedom and they can reach it. That is why they want other people

to be aware of freedom like they do. So they influence and motivate other people to reach freedom.

### 3.2.2 Setting of Places

There are several places that the author uses for certain events in this novel. Veronica Roth describes the place of the event she wants to create in detail. She wants to make the readers imagine where the characters are and in what situation the characters have been living. Veronica makes this novel alive with her clear explanation. Some places that are used in the novel are the test administrator's room, the choosing ceremony's room, the rooftop of the Dauntless's building, and the pit. There are places where the important events that are related to the issue happen.

### 3.2.3 Events

Veronica creates many important events in this novel. She begins the story with the first important event called aptitude test. Then she makes bigger events to fit the theme. Freedom of choice is seen in several events that Veronica creates.

### 3.2.4 Diction

#### 1) Special Expression

In this matter, special expression or special phrase is used to call a group of people. It can be based on their behavior, their strength, how they dress, how they live, etc. In this novel, the researcher finds two special expressions. Stiff and Soldier.

#### 2) Special Term

A special term is used for a special purpose or to describe something more specifically. In the *Divergent* novel, there are so many special terms that are used. The common term that can be found easily in the novel is *Divergent*. This term is also used as the title of the novel. There are five

factions in the *Divergent* novel. Five of them are using special terms. Last but not least is Factionless.

### 3.2.5 Imagery & Symbol

#### 1) Imagery

In this research, the researcher will describe the imagery of each faction. There are five factions; Dauntless, Abnegation, Erudite, Candor and Amity. Each faction has different characteristics, different behaviors, different minds, etc. They also live in different areas. The imagery of their areas is very different. It depends on their other characteristics as well. In this novel, Veronica only describes three of out five factions, Abnegation, Dauntless, and Erudite. It is because those factions have a huge part in the story. Abnegation is the main character's old faction, Dauntless is the main character's new faction and Erudite is the faction where Jeanine, the antagonist, lives.

#### 2) Symbol

In Choosing Ceremony Day, there are five big metal bowls. Each one contains a substance that represents each faction, gray stones for Abnegation, water for Erudite, earth for Amity, lit coals for Dauntless and glass for Candor. It means every faction has a symbol that represents their faction.

### 3.3 Reasons for Addressing Freedom of Choice

In writing *Divergent*, Veronica is inspired by many things. One of them is her thinking when she was 16 years old. There is one part where the characters of the novel have to choose their own factions when they reach age 16. Veronica writes it because when she was 16 years old, she has the freedom to decide her own choice, what class she wants to take, pick a major she likes, etc. She thinks that the you-have-to-choose-at-16 thing is more of an emotional reality for young

people than a physical one because obviously as we grow older we can change our minds; we can change our choice or anything. So she decides to put 16 years old instead of 18 or 19 in the novel.

In her interview with SparkLife, she says that she is a huge fan of novel *Harry Potter*. Veronica Roth says that *Harry Potter* and the Hogwarts houses began her fascination with “sorting people into categories”. In *Harry Potter*, we have a giant sorting hat to decide our choice but somehow the main character (Harry Potter) gets to decide his own choice. In *Divergent*, Veronica uses aptitude test to decide the choices of the characters in her novel but somehow the main character (Tris Prior) gets to decide her own choice without having to be afraid of what people think.

### 3.4 Discussion

After analyzing the novel, the researcher found the existentialist perspective using the principles of Bigelow’s six basic tenants. The researcher found that *Existence Before Essence*, *Absurdity*, *Fear*, and *Freedom* have the role in searching freedom of choice.

Firstly, the researcher found *existence before essences* depicted in the novel. It is depicted when the main character (Tris Prior) decides to go with her own choice. She has three choices and she chooses to be in Dauntless and leave Abnegation. Although she is from Abnegation, she is sure she will fit in Dauntless because she is Divergent.

Secondly, the researcher found *absurdity* in the novel. A character named Four is a cold and mysterious leader but inside, he is very sensitive. He keeps a secret about him leaving his old faction. Everybody thinks that he is a pure Dauntless member. He chooses to leave his old faction because he has a problem with his dad. That is why his dad shows up in his fear landscape. He tells Tris about it.

Thirdly, the researcher found *Fear*, *Trembling*, and *Anxiety* depicted in the novel. The new members of Dauntless have to jump off the building. Everyone is afraid because the hole looks dark and deep. Nobody knows

what in the bottom is. The main character of the novel (Tris) is actually also feel scared but she chooses to be the first jumper. She thinks that it is her time to be brave. She will prove herself that she deserves to be in Dauntless.

Lastly, the researcher found *Freedom* depicted in the novel. This novel takes freedom of choice as the issue. There are several proofs that freedom is depicted in the novel. One of them is when Tris has to choose between five factions, she chooses Dauntless over Abnegation. She knows she will be separated from her family but she thinks that it is her time to decide what she really wants. She knows herself more than anyone.

Freedom of choice is the issue that the researcher analyzed. The author wants to show the readers about the efforts of making choices or making decisions through the characters in the novel. The issue also includes some other banal issues in existentialism such as Existence Before Essence, Absurdity, Fear, and Freedom.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

Based on the analysis of the previous chapter, the researcher finds out that there are three conclusions for the answer to the problem statements.

Firstly, that there are five indicators of freedom of choice depicted in the novel as follows: brave for choosing different choices from other people, consistent with the choices, increase self-esteem, protect others and keep a secret. Choosing different choice refers to the struggle of making different choices from other people and take the sequences. Being consistent with the choice refers to the main character's characteristics. Once she chooses something, she will never change nor regret it. Increasing self-esteem refers to the efforts of the characters to fit in some places or to prove that they belong to certain places. Protecting others refers to the need of protecting the one that you love from danger. Keeping secret refers to keeping something important to you and let nobody knows about it.

Secondly, freedom of choice is depicted in the novel through characters, setting of places, events, diction and imagery & symbol. In creating characters, the researcher found that there are three types of characters depicted in the novel, as follows: Oppressed Characters, freedom-seeking characters and awareness-raising characters. In the setting of places, the researcher also found that there are several places that the author uses for certain events in this novel such as administrator's room, choosing ceremony's room, the rooftop of the Dauntless building, training room and the pit. In creating events, the researcher also found that there are four plots/events of freedom of choice depicted in the novel as follows; Aptitude test, Choosing Ceremony Day, jump off the train and target practice.

Thirdly, the reasons why Veronica Roth addresses freedom of choice in this novel are because she wants to tell the readers about her thinking when she was sixteen years old. She thinks that at that age, we start to decide our own choice. That is why Veronica writes 16 years old in the novel. Besides that, Veronica Roth also says that novel Harry Potter gives her inspiration to write this novel.

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